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VULGARITY.

IF the present age were less of a hypocrite than it is, probably its conscience would compel it to acknowledge that vulgarity is excessively common in it ; more common than in any preceding time, despite its very bountiful assumptions of good taste and generalized education.

Vulgarity is almost a modern vice ; it is doubtful whether classic ages knew it at all, except in that sense in which it must be said that even Socrates was vulgar, *i. e.* inquisitiveness, and in that other sense of love of display to which the tailless dog of Alkibiades was a mournful victim. I am aware that Alkibiades said he cut off his dog's tail and ears to give the Athenians something to talk of, that they might not gossip about what else he was doing. But though gossip was no doubt rife in Athens, still vulgarity in its worst sense, that is, in the struggle to seem what the struggler is not, could have had no existence in times when every man's place was marked out for him, and the lines of demarcation could not be overstepped. Vulgarity began when the freedman began to give himself airs, and strut, and talk, as though he had been a porphyrogenitus ; and this pretension was only possible in a decadence.

There may be a vast vulgarity of soul with an admirable polish of manners, and there may be a vast vulgarity of manner with a generous delicacy of soul. But, in this life, we are usually compelled to go by appearances, and we can seldom see beyond them, except in the cases of those few dear to, and intimate with us. We must be pardoned if we judge by the externals that are palpable to us and do not divine the virtues hidden beneath them. An essayist has recently defined good manners as courtesy and truthfulness. Now this is simply nonsense. A person may be full of kindly courtesies, and never utter the shadow of an untruth, and

yet he may have red-hot hands, a strident voice, an insupportable manner, dropped aspirates, and a horribly gross joviality, which make him the vulgarest of the vulgar. It is often said that a perfect Christian is a perfect gentleman, but this also is a very doubtful postulate. The good Christian may "love his neighbor as himself," and yet he may offend his ear with a cockney accent and sit down to his table with unwashed hands. "Manners make the man" is an old copy-book adage, and is not quite true either : but it is certain that, without good manners, the virtues of a saint may be more offensive, by far, to society than the vices of a sinner. It is a mistake to confuse moral qualities with the qualities which come from culture and from breeding.

I have said that Socrates must have been in a certain degree vulgar, because he was so abominably inquisitive. For surely all interrogation is vulgar. When strangers visit me I can at once tell whether they are ill-bred or high-bred persons by the mere fact of whether they do or do not ask me questions. Even in intimacy, much interrogation is a vulgarity ; it may be taken for granted that your friend will tell you what he wishes you to know. Here and there when a question seems necessary, if silence would imply coldness and indifference, then must it be put with the utmost delicacy and without any kind of semblance of its being considered a demand which must be answered. All interrogation for purposes of curiosity is vulgar, curiosity itself being so vulgar ; and even the plea of friendship or of love cannot be pleaded in extenuation of it. But if love and friendship be pardoned their inquisitiveness, the anxiety of the general public to have their curiosity satisfied as to the habits, ways and scandals of those who are conspicuous in any way, is mere vulgar intrusiveness, which the "society newspapers," as they are called, do, in all countries, feed to a most pernicious degree. Private life has no longer any door that it can shut and bolt against the intrusion of the crowd. Whether a royal prince has quarreled with his wife, or a country mayoress has quarreled with a house-maid, the press, large or small, metropolitan or provincial, serves up the story to the rapacious curiosity of the world-wide, or the merely local, public. This intrusion on personal and wholly private matters is an evil which increases every day ; it is a twofold evil, for it is alike a curse to those whose privacy it poisons and a curse to those whose debased appetites it feeds. It would be wholly impossible, in an

age which was not vulgar, for those journals which live on personalities to find a public. They are created by the greed of the multitude which calls for them. It is useless to blame the proprietors and editors who live on them; the true culprits are the readers—the legions of readers—who relish and patronize them, and without whose support such carrion flies could not live out a summer.

“It is so easy to talk about people” is the excuse constantly made by those who are reproved for gossiping about others who are not even, perhaps, their personal acquaintances. Yes, it is very easy; the most mindless creature can do it; the asp, be he ever so small, can sting the hero, and perchance can slay him; but gossip of a malicious kind is intensely vulgar, and to none but the vulgar should it be welcome, even if their vulgarity be such as is hidden under a cloak of good manners. It is true that there is a sort of spurious wit which springs out of calumny, and which is *malgré nous* too often diverting to the best of us, and this sort of personality has a kind of contagious attraction which is apt to grow even on those who loathe it, much as absinthe does. But it is none the less vulgar, and vulgarizes the mind which admits its charm, as absinthe slowly eats up the vitality and the digestive powers of those who yield to its attraction. Were there no vulgarity, it may be said that there would be no scandal; for scandal is born of that marked desire to think ill of others, and that restless inquisitiveness into affairs that do not concern us, which is pre-eminently vulgar. When we talk of the follies of our friends, or the backslidings of our acquaintances, in a duchess’s boudoir, we are every whit as vulgar as the fishwives or the village dames jabbering of the sins of Jack and Jill in any ale-house. The roots of the vulgarity are the same; inquisitiveness and idleness. All personalities are vulgar; and whether personalities are used as the base weapons to turn an argument, or as the equally base bait wherewith to make the fortunes of a newspaper, they are alike offensive and unpardonable. The best characteristic of the best society would be that they should be absolutely forbidden in it.

Another reason why the present age is more vulgar than any preceding it may also be found in the fact that in it pretension is infinitely more abundant, because infinitely more successful than it ever was before. An autocratic aristocracy and a perfect equality

would equally make pretension impossible. But, at the present time, aristocracy is without power, and equality has no existence outside the dreams of Utopians. The result is, that the whole vast mass of humanity, uncontrolled, can struggle, and push, and strive, and sweat, and exhaust itself, to appear something that it is not, and all repose and calm and dignity, which are the foes of vulgarity, are destroyed.

Essayists have often attempted to define high breeding ; but it remains indefinable. Its incomparable charm, its perfect ease, its dignity which is never asserted, yet which the most obtuse can always feel is in reserve, its very manner of performing all the trifling acts of social usage and obligation, are beyond definition. They are too delicate and too subtle for the hardness of classification. The courtier of the old story who, when told by Louis Quatorze to go first, went first without protest, was a high-bred gentleman. Charles the First, when he kept his patience and his peace under the insults of his trial at Westminster, was one also. Mme. du Barry screams and sobs at the foot of the guillotine ; Marie Antoinette is calm.

True, I once knew a perfectly well-bred person who yet could neither read nor write. I can see her now in her little cottage in the Derbyshire woods, on the brown, flashing water of the Derwent River (Darron, as the people of Derbyshire call it), a fair, neat, stout, old woman with a round face and a clean mob cap. She had been a factory girl in her youth (indeed, all her womanhood had worked at the cotton mill on the river), and now was too old to do anything except to keep her one-roomed cottage, with its tall, lancet windows, its peaked, red roof, and its sweet-smelling garden, with its high elder hedge, as neat, and fresh, and clean as human hands could make them. Dear old woman ! with her racy, Chaucerian English, and her happy, cheerful temper, and her silver spectacles, which some of the "gentry" had given her, and her big Bible open on the little round table, and the black kettle boiling in the wide fire-place, and her casements wide open to the nodding moss-roses and the sweet-brier boughs. Dear old woman ! she was a bit of Shakespeare's England, of Milton's England, of Spenser's England, and the memory of her, and of her cottage by the brown, bright river, often comes back to me across the width of years. She was a perfectly well-bred person ; she made one welcome to her little home with simple, perfect

courtesy, without flutter, or fuss, or any effort of any sort ; she had neither envy nor servility ; grateful for all kindness, she never either abused "the gentry" or flattered them ; and her admirable manner never varied to the peddler at her door or to the squire of her village ; would never have varied, I am sure, if the queen of her country had crossed her door-step. For she had the repose of contentment, of simplicity, and of that self-respect which can never exist where envy and effort are. She could neither read nor write ; she scrubbed and washed and worked for herself ; she had never left that one little green nook of Derbyshire, or seen other roads than the hilly one which went up to the pine woods behind her house ; but she was a perfectly well-bred woman, born of a time calmer, broader, wiser, more generous than ours.

A few miles off in the valley, where she never by any chance went, the excursion trains used to vomit forth, at Easter and in Whitsun week, throngs of the mill hands of the period, cads and their flames ; tawdry, blowzy, noisy, drunken ; the women with dress that aped "the fashion," and pyramids of artificial flowers on their heads ; the men as grotesque and hideous in their own way, tearing through woods and fields like swarms of devastating locusts, and dragging the fern and hawthorn boughs they had torn down in the dust, ending the lovely spring day in pot-houses, drinking gin and bitters, or heavy ales by the quart, and tumbling pell-mell into the night train, roaring music-hall choruses ; sodden, tipsy, yelling, loathsome creatures, such as make the monkey look a king, and the newt seem an angel beside humanity,—exact semblance and emblem of the vulgarity of the age.

I pass to-day a little wine-house built this year ; it has been run up in a few months by a speculative builder ; it has its name and purpose gaudily sprawling in letters two feet long across its front ; it has bright green shutters and a slate roof with no eaves ; it has a dusty graveled space in front of it ; it looks tawdry, stingy, pretentious, meager, squalid, fine, all in one. A little way off it is another wine-house, built somewhere about the sixteenth century ; it is made of solid gray stone ; it has a roof of brown tiles, with overhanging eaves like a broad-leaved hat drawn down to shade a modest countenance ; it has deep arched windows, with some carved stone around and above them ; it has an outside stairway in stone and some ivy creeping about it ; it has grass

before it and some cherry and peach trees ; the only sign of its calling is the green bough hung above the doorway. The two wine-houses are, methinks, most apt examples of the sobriety and beauty which our forefathers put into the humblest things of life and the flimsy tawdriness and unendurable hideousness which the present age displays in all it produces. I have not a doubt that the one under the cherry tree, with its bough for a sign, and its deep, cool casements, and its clean, aged look, will be soon deserted by the majority of the carters and fruit growers and river fishermen who pass this way, in favor of its vulgar rival where I am quite sure the wines will be watered tenfold and the artichokes fried in rancid oil ; its patrons will eat and drink ill, but they will go to the new one, I doubt not, all of them, except a few old men, who will cling to the habit of their youth. Very possibly those who own the old one will feel compelled to adapt themselves to the progress of the age ; will cut the eaves off their roof, cut down their fruit trees, whitewash their gray stone, and turn their fine old windows into French doors with green blinds,—and still it will not equal its rival in the eyes of the carters and fishers and gardeners, since it was not made yesterday ! Neither its owners nor its customers can scarcely be expected to be wiser than are all the municipal counselors of Europe.

Perfect simplicity is the antithesis of vulgarity, and simplicity is the quality which modern life is most calculated to destroy. The whole tendency of modern education is to create an intense self-consciousness ; and whoever is self-conscious has lost the charm of simplicity, and has already become vulgar in a manner. The most high-bred persons are those in whom we find a perfect naturalness, an entire absence of self-consciousness. The whole influence of modern education is to concentrate the mind of the child on itself ; as it grows up this egoism becomes confirmed ; you have at once an individual both self-absorbed and affected, both hard towards others and vain of itself.

When pretension was less possible, vulgarity was less visible, because its chief root did not exist. When the French nobility, in the time of Louis Quatorze, began to *engraisser leurs terres* with the ill-acquired fortunes of farmer-general's daughters, their manners began to deteriorate and their courtesy began to be no more than an empty shell filled with rottenness. They were not yet vulgar in their manners, but vulgarity had begun to taint their

minds and their race, and their *mésalliances* did not have the power to save them from the scaffold. Cowardice is always vulgar, and the present age is pre-eminently cowardly; full of egotistic nervousness and unconcealed fear of all those physical dangers to which science has told all men they are liable. Pasteur is its god, and the microbe its Mephistopheles. A French writer defined it, the other day, as the age of the "infinitely little." It might be also defined as the age of absorbing self-consciousness. It is eternally placing itself in innumerable attitudes to pose before the camera of a photographer; the old, the ugly, the obscure, the deformed, delight in multiplying their likenesses on cardboard, even more than do the young, the beautiful, the famous, and the well-made. All the resources of invention are taxed to reproduce effigies of persons who have not a good feature in their faces or a correct line in their limbs, and all the resources of science are solicited to keep breath in the bodies of people who had better never have lived at all. Cymon grins before a camera as self-satisfied as though he were Adonis, and Demos is told that he is the one sacred offspring of the gods to which all creation is freely sacrificed. Out of this self-worship springs a hideous, a blatant vulgarity, which is more likely to increase than to diminish. Exaggeration of our own value is one of the most offensive of all the forms of vulgarity, and science has much to answer for in its present pompous and sycophantic attitude before the importance and the excellence of humanity. Humanity gets drunk on such intoxicating flattery of itself.

Nay, see how even what is called the "best" society sins as these do who forsake the gray stone house for the slate-roofed and stuccoed one. There has been an endless outcry about good taste in the last score of years. But where is it to be really found? Not in the crowds who rush all over the world by steam, nor in those who dwell in modern cities. Good taste cannot be gregarious. Good taste cannot endure a square box to live in, however the square box may be colored. That the modern poet can reside in Westbourne Grove, and the modern painter in Cromwell Road, is enough to set the hair of all the Muses on end. If Carlyle had lived at Concord, like Emerson, how much calmer and wiser thought, how much less jaundiced raving would the world have had from him! That is to say, if he would have had the soul to feel the green and fragrant tranquillity of Concord, which is doubt-

ful. Cities may do good to the minds of men by the friction of opinions found in them, but life spent only in cities under their present conditions is debasing and pernicious, for those conditions are essentially and hopelessly vulgar.

If the soul of Shelley in the body of Sardanapalus, with the riches of Cræsus, could now dwell in Paris, London, or New York, it is doubtful whether he would be able to resist the pressure of the social forces round him and strike out any new forms of pleasure or festivity. All that he would be able to do would, perhaps, be to give better dinners than other people. The forms of entertainment in them are monotonous, and trivial where they are not coarse. When a man colossally rich, and therefore boundlessly powerful, appears, what new thing does he originate? What fresh grace does he add to society; what imagination does he bring into his efforts to amuse the world? None; absolutely none. He may have more gold plate than other people; he may have more powdered footmen about his hall; he may have rose-wood mangers for his stables; but he has no invention, no brilliancy, no independence of tradition; he will follow all the old worn ways of what is called pleasure, and he will ask crowds to push and perspire on his staircases, and will conceive that he has amused the world.

When one reflects on the immense possibilities of an enormously rich man, or a very great prince, and sees all the *banalité*, the repetition and the utter lack of any imagination, in all that these rich men and their great princes do, one is forced to conclude that the vulgarity of the world at large has been too much for them, and that they can no more struggle against it than a rhinoceros against a quagmire; his very weight serves to make the poor giant sink deeper and quicker into the slime.

From his birth to his death it is hard indeed for any man, even the greatest, to escape the vulgarity of the world around him. Scarcely is he born than the world seizes him, to make him absurd with the fussy conventionalities of the baptismal ceremony, and, after clogging his steps, and clinging to him throughout his whole existence, Vulgarity will seize on his dead body and make even that grotesque with the low comedy of its funeral rites. Had Victor Hugo not possessed very real qualities of greatness in him he would have been made ridiculous forever by the farce of the burial which Paris intended as an honor to him.

All ceremonies of life which ought to be characterized by simplicity and dignity, vulgarity has marked and seized for its own. What can be more vulgar than the marriage ceremony in all of what are called "civilized countries?" What can more completely take away all delicacy, sanctity, privacy and poetry from love than these crowds, this parade, these coarse exhibitions, this public advertisement of what should be hidden away in silence and in sacred solitude? To see a marriage at the Madeleine or St. Philippe du Roule, or St. George's, Hanover Square, or any other great church in any great city of the world, is to see the vulgarity of modern life at its height. The rape of the Sabines, or the rough bridal still in favor with the Turcomans and Tartars, is modesty and beauty beside the fashionable wedding of the nineteenth century, or the grotesque commonplace of civil marriage. Catullus would not have written "O Hymen Hymenæe!" if he had been taken to contemplate the thousand and one rare petticoats of a modern trousseau, or the tricolored scarf of a continental mayor, or the chairs and tables of a registry office in England or America.

Modern habit has contrived to dwarf and to vulgarize everything, from the highest passions to the simplest actions; and its chains are so strong that the king in his palace and the philosopher in his study cannot keep altogether free of them.

Why has it done so? Presumably because this vulgarity is acceptable and agreeable to the majority. In modern life the majority, however blatant, ignorant or incapable, gives the law, and the *âmes d'élite* have, being few in number, no power to oppose to the flood of coarse commonplace with which they are surrounded and overwhelmed. Plutocracy is everywhere replacing aristocracy, and has its arrogance without its elegance. The tendency of the age is not towards the equalizing of fortunes, despite the boasts of modern liberalism; it is rather towards the creation of enormous individual fortunes, rapidly acquired and lying in an indigested mass on the stomach of Humanity. It is not the possessors of these riches who will purify the world from vulgarity. Vulgarity is, on the contrary, likely to live, and multiply, and increase in power and in extent. Haste is one of its parents, and pretension the other. Hurry can never be either gracious or graceful, and the effort to appear what we are not is the deadliest foe to peace and to personal dignity.

“ Dans les anciennes sociétés l'aristocratie de l'argent était contrepesée par l'aristocratie de la naissance, l'aristocratie de l'esprit, et l'aristocratie du cœur. Mais nous, en abandonnant jusqu'au souvenir même de ces distinctions, nous n'avons laissé subsister que celles que la fortune peut mettre entre les hommes. . . . Dans les anciennes sociétés la fortune comme la noblesse représentait quelque chose d'autre, si je puis ainsi dire, et de plus qu'elle-même. Elle était vraiment une force sociale parcequ'elle était une force morale. On s'enrichissait lentement : de telle sorte que la richesse représentait non-seulement, comme je crois que disent les économistes, le travail accumulé de trois ou quatre générations, mais encore toutes les vertus modestes qui perpétuent l'amour du travail dans une même famille, et quelque chose enfin de plus haut, de plus noble, de plus rare que tout cela : le sacrifice de l'égoïsme à l'intérêt, la considération, la dignité du nom. . . . Il n'y a plus d'effort, il n'y a même pas de travail à l'origine d'un grand nombre de ces nouvelles fortunes, et l'on peut se demander s'il y a seulement de l'intelligence. Mais, en revanche, il y a de l'audace et surtout cette conviction que la richesse n'a pas de juges mais seulement des envieux et des adorateurs. C'est ce qui fait aujourd'hui l'immoralité toute particulière et toute nouvelle de cette adoration que nous professons publiquement pour lui. Le temps approche où il ne sera pas fâcheux mais honteux d'être pauvre.”

These words of the celebrated French critic, Brunettière, written apropos of *La France Juive*, are essentially true, even if truth is in them somewhat exaggerated. The modern worship of riches *per se* is a vulgarity, and as he has said, it even amounts to a crime.

This is altogether opposed to the temper of the age ; it is called reactionary, old-fashioned and exclusive ; but there is a vast quantity of truth in it. If the edge were not rubbed off of personal dignity, if the bloom were not brushed off of good taste, and the appreciation of privacy and *recueillement* greatly weakened, all the personalities of the press and of society would never have been endured or permitted to attain the growth which they have attained. The faults of an age are begotten and born out of itself ; it suffers from what it creates. One looks in vain, in this age, for any indication of any new revolt against the bond of vulgarity, or return to more delicate, more dignified, more reserved manners of life. If socialism should have its way with the world (which is possible), it will not only be vulgar, it will be sordid ; all loveliness will perish ; and, with all ambition forbidden, heroism and greatness will be things unknown, and genius a crime against the divinity of the Eternal Mediocre. The socialism of Bakounine, of Marx, of Krapotkine, of Tolstoï, is the dreariest and dullest of all earthly things—an Utopia without an idea, a level as blank and hopeless as the dust plains of a Russian summer. It may be a vision, dreary as it is, which will one day be realized. There is hourly growing

in the world a dull and sullen antagonism against all superiority, all pre-eminent excellence, whether of intellect, birth or manner ; and this jealousy has the germs in it of that universal war on superiority which will be necessary to bring about the triumph of socialism. At present, society is stronger than the socialists—is stronger in Germany, in America, in Italy, in Russia, even in France ; but how much longer it will have this superior strength who can say ? Socialism being founded, not on love, as it pretends, but on hatred—hatred of superiority—appeals to a malignant instinct in human nature, in the mediocrity of human nature, which is likely to increase as the vast and terrible increase of population makes the struggle of existence more close and more desperate. Socialism will very possibly ravage and lay waste the earth like a hydra-headed Attila ; but there will be nothing to be hoped for from it in aid of the graces, the charms, or the dignity of life. Were riches more careful of these, they would hold their own better in the contest with socialism. Were society more elegant, more self-respecting, more intelligent, more distinguished, it would give its defenders much more reason and strength to plead in favor of its preservation.

But society is on the whole both stupid and vulgar. It scarcely knows the good from the bad in anything. If a fashion is set, it follows the fashion sheepishly, without knowing why it does so. It has neither genuine conscience, nor genuine taste. It will stone A. for what it admires in B., and will crucify Y. for what it smilingly condones in Z. It has no true standard for anything. It is at once hypercritical and over-indulgent. What it calls its taste is but a purblind servility. It will take the deformed *dachshund* as a pet and neglect all the beautiful races of dogs ; it will broil in throngs on a bare strip of sand, and avoid all the lovely places by wood and sea ; it will worship a black rose, and never glance at all the roses which nature has made. If only Fashion decree, the *dachshund*, the bare sand, and the black rose are to it the idols of the hour. It has no consistency ; it will change the Japanese for the Rococo, the Renaissance for the Queen Anne, the Watteau for the Oriental, or mix them all together at the mere weather-cock dictate of fashion or caprice. It has no more consistency in its code of morals ; it will ask Messalina anywhere as long as a prince speaks to her and she is the fashion ; if the prince cease to speak and she cease to be the

fashion, it puts up its fan at her vices, and scores her name out of its visiting list. There is no reality in either its pretensions to morality or good taste.

When we think of the immense potentialities and capabilities of society, of all that it might become, of all that it might accomplish, and behold the monotony of insipid folly, of ape-like imitation, of consummate hypocrisy in which it is content to roll on through the course of the years, one cannot but feel that, if its ultimate doom be to be swallowed up and vomited forth again, lifeless and shapeless, by the dragon of socialism, it will have no more than its due ; that it will fall through its own sloth and vileness as the empire of Rome fell under the hordes of the barbarians.

That charming writer Gustave Droz has said that railways are at once the symbol and the outcome of the vulgarity of the age ; and that whoever lets himself be shot through space like a parcel through a tube, and condescends to eat in a crowd at a station buffet, cannot by any possibility retain dignity of appearance or elegance of manners. The inelegant scrambling and pushing, and elbowing and vociferating of a modern railway station form an exact and painful image of this restless, rude, and gregarious century.

Compare the stately progress of a Queen Elizabeth, or a Louis Quatorze through the provinces, calm, leisurely, dignified, magnificent, with the modern monarch or prince always in movement as if he were a *commis-voyageur*, interviewed ridiculously on a square of red carpet on a station-platform and breathlessly listening to a breathless mayor's silly and verbose address of welcome ; then rushing off, as if he were paid so much an hour, to be jostled at a dog show, hustled at an agricultural exhibition, and forced to shake hands with the very politicians who have just brought before the House the abolition of the royal prerogative. It is not the question here of whether royalty is, or is not, better upheld or abolished ; but so long as royalty exists, and so long as its existence is dear to many millions, and esteemed of benefit by them, it is infinitely to be regretted that it should have lost, as it has lost, all the divinity which should hedge a king.

Recent publications of royal feelings and royal doings may be of use to the enemies of royalty by showing what twaddling nothings fill up its day ; but to royalty itself they can only be be-littleing and injurious in a great degree, whilst the want of

delicacy which could give to the public eye such intimate revelations of personal emotions and struggles with poverty, as the publication of the "Letters of the Princess Alice of England," made public property, is so staring and so strange that it seems like the public desecration of a grave.

Books, in which the most trivial and personal details are published in print by those who should veil their faces like the Latins in sorrow and veil them in their purples, could only be possible in an age in which vulgarity has even reached up and sapped the very foundations of all thrones. One cannot but feel pity for the poor dead princess, who would surely have writhed under such indignity, when one sees in the crudeness and cruelty of print her homely descriptions of suckling her children and struggling with a narrow purse, descriptions so plainly intended for no eyes but those of the person to whom they were addressed. Better—how much better!—have buried with her those humble letters in which the soul is seen naked as in its prayer-closet, and no more fit to be dragged out into the garish day of publicity than the bodily nakedness of a chaste woman is fit to be pilloried in a market place. I repeat, only an age intensely and despairingly vulgar could have rendered the publication of such letters as those royal letters to royal persons possible. Letters of intimacy are the most sacred things of life; they are the proofs of the most intimate trust and confidence which can be placed in us; and to make them public is to violate all the sweetest sanctities of life and of death.

La pudeur de l'âme is forever destroyed where such exposure of feelings, the most intimate and the most personal, becomes possible. In the preface to those letters it is said that the public will in these days know everything about us, and therefore it is better that they should know the truth from us. Not so; this attitude is indeed submission to the mob: it is unveiling the bosom in the market place. Any amount of calumny cannot destroy dignity; but dignity is forever destroyed when it condescends to call in the multitude to count its tears and see its kisses. The great man and the great woman should say to the world: "Think of me what you choose. It is indifferent to me. You are not my master; and I shall never accept you as a judge." This should be the attitude of all royalty, whether that of the king, the hero, or the genius.

OUIDA.